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J. Henry Burton
The Mission of the Comforter.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST CHURCH,

FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK,

ON

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By JOHN, BISHOP OF FREDERICTON.

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TO

His Excellency Major-General Hastings Doyle,

And many other kind friends,

THESE DISCOURSES, PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE DEDICATED, WITH EVERY FEELING OF RESPECT AND AFFECTION,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND BISHOP,

JOHN FREDERICTON.

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THE MISSION OF THE COMFORTER.

"THE Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." — ST. JOHN xiv. 26.



HE chapter from which my text is taken, and the two chapters which follow it, form at all times, but especially at this season,* most profitable subjects for the Christian's private reading and meditation. That the Scriptures are by many not read at all, and by many more read to little purpose, can hardly be denied. The business of life absorbs the whole attention, and even the Lord's day is not devoted, as it might be, to this kind of spiritual improvement. How small a hold must religion have upon the heart, when not even a portion of the day of rest can be spared for this great purpose. It is true we regularly attend public worship, and hear the Scriptures read with attention and devoutness; and we may be supposed to have discharged some part of what are called religious duties. But in order to union and communion with God,—in order to the fulfilment of that glorious destiny for which we were sent into the world,—there must be something beyond attendance at Church: the truths which we hear must have a deep hold-fast in the heart itself, and they must be the principles on which our life and practice are built. For how immense is the danger that the busy scenes of political life, the eager computation of money, the schemes of management and co-operation with others, will so absorb the mind, that it will lose all interest in the eternal world; and the danger is the greatest when we do not see it. The fear is, that, even on the Lord's Day, the mind may be unable to do more than to give to God a superficial discharge of the offices of religion, while the Christian is not so in love with truth as to take up the holy Word of his own accord, and think it out quietly by himself. We may even make use of religious services, so as to shut out private reading altogether. Now, after so much has been said of the impor-

* Preached on Whitsunday.

tance of having the Scripture translated into our mother tongue, and freely accessible to all, are not many, by their own neglect, placed in the same condition with those who have no translation of the Bible, and no knowledge of it? And thus it happens, that whilst other Christians are fiercely assailed for depriving their members of this special blessing, the very persons who glory in their possession of the Scriptures neglect to use them, and are, by their neglect, in a worse condition than those over whose miserable estate they continually lament. Among the subjects which our Church presses on our attention, we find especially prominent the subject of the coming, the presence, the assistance, and consolation of the Holy Ghost. The promise of the Comforter was the special topic of consolation to the sorrowing Apostles on the eve of our Lord's departure. "I will not leave you orphans," he said tenderly; "I am coming to you." Coming, not in bodily presence, not in manifestation of judgment, but in sending the great representative of the Father and the Son, who is known as the Holy Spirit. Our Lord speaks of Him as possessing all the attributes of a person, and of a Divine person. He can hear, speak, come, and dwell. He can keep, comfort, and intercede. He can be vexed, quenched, grieved, and forced to depart. He can enlighten their understandings and refresh their memories. He can impart grace, truth, light, love, peace, and joy. He proceeds from the Father, and is sent by the Son, and by the Father. He is as omnipotent as the Father, as ever-present as the Son, and is joined with them in the great act of initiation into the Christian covenant, the solemn homage of heart-worship, and in the three-fold blessing which corresponds to the blessing which Moses taught the children of Israel to use when the ark moved and rested. The fellowship of the Spirit is to be sought for as earnestly as the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of the eternal Father. What solid proofs are here of the Divine nature of the blessed Spirit; and how entirely incompatible are the expressions with the supposition that He is a mere attribute or influence of the Almighty!

Again, all the manifestations of Divine power which accompanied the life of our Lord, and which followed the fulfilment of his promise that he would "send" the Spirit "from the Father," are ascribed in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles of St. Paul, to the agency of the Holy Ghost; and they were as truly miraculous, and as truly proceeded from God, as any of those works which, as our Lord declared, showed that "He proceeded forth and came from God." Nor need we limit this supernatural and miraculous agency to the age of visible miracles. Real miracles may be wrought, when visible miracles are no longer vouchsafed. The Holy Spirit's miraculous power need not be limited to those bodily cures, or to those manifestations of power over the sphere of nature, which form

a large portion of the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and even in the infancy of the Christian Church. And I know not why in a more spiritual sphere of action, agreeably to the genius of the Christian dispensation, the Holy Ghost may not work continual miracles in the Christian Church. And as in the imperfect dispensation given to the Jews, the test of faith was to receive the teacher as come from God, when he was enabled to exercise unusual power over natural things and persons, so possibly one test of faith now may be to believe in the work of the Holy Ghost, as sanctifying the creatures of God to high and spiritual uses, and to realize his work, as truly miraculous, though no outward change takes place in the persons and things which are the subjects of his power. And this may be more truly an act of faith than if we saw one rise from the dead, on the great principle announced by our Lord, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Indeed, this principle of the continual working of the Holy Ghost, and by greater works than Christ himself did on earth, is the special promise of the Christian dispensation. We are told by St. Peter, that the "holy men," who spake and wrote before our Lord's advent, were "moved" or borne on by the impulses of the Holy Ghost; nor can we imagine any good thing in the heart of man which did not proceed from this source. Still, in a very important sense "the Holy Spirit was not given until Christ was glorified;" that is, until he ascended into Heaven. The gift of the Holy Ghost to be the representative of the Father and of the Son was not made. No general grace had been poured out on the world. No great commission had been issued to baptize all nations. No one had been appointed over the whole Church, of whom the Spirit should be the invisible, but real, active, and ever-abiding representative. The separate and subordinate gift may have been bestowed on the individual mind, as the Psalmist says, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me;" but this was not a collective gift for the whole Church, as the Apostle speaks. "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "And have been all made to drink of the same Spirit." "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Thus in special connection with Jesus Christ as "the head over all things to his Church, the fulness of him who filleth all in all," is the continued abiding and in-dwelling of the Comforter in the "Church which is his body," and in the hearts of all who believe in, love, and obey him.

How these great and plainly revealed truths are to be reconciled with the Unity of God, is a subject far above the reach of any human mind. But the fact that many stumble at the doctrine, as soon as they begin to try it by the measures of sight and reason, is no valid objection to it. Whatever God reveals transcends our reason; and if viewed only in one aspect appears to be contradictory to it. I say,

if viewed only in one aspect or one side; for it certainly is not contradictory to reason to say that the Divine Being is both One and Three, provided He is not Three in the same sense in which He is One. Admitting the Unity of God to be the fundamental Article of all faith, we cannot add to this simple statement that God is One, the necessary complements of that doctrine, that He is eternally self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, without an apparent contradiction in language: for what is clearer than that anything beyond Time and Space we have no idea whatsoever, and as soon as we attempt to state it, we are involved in contradictions? And what is apparently clearer than that a personal agent cannot be wholly present in two places at one and the same time, and that such a being must be capable of being circumscribed by certain bonds and limits? The objections therefore urged against the doctrine of the Trinity, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, arise in some measure from our neglecting to analyse our ideas on the attributes of God in his simple Unity. For these ideas will be found to be as full of inconsistency, as soon as we begin to try them by the measures of human reason. The truth is, we have no measure of a Divine Being. He exists in a sphere above and beyond our own. Once admit a Revelation, and what is revealed is a pure matter of faith with which reason has nothing to do, except to try to discover the meaning of the words in which the Revelation is made. The thing itself is matter for adoration, not investigation.

But let us now apply ourselves to the consideration of the text itself. "The Comforter: He shall teach you all things." The Son of God whilst he remained with man, was our Comforter, by his teaching, by his glorious example, and by his wondrous patience, "even unto death." But the Holy Ghost can do more for man than the Lord Jesus effected on earth.

The Son, having limited himself to a human body, would have been circumscribed within the bounds of one place, and the benefits which he bestowed must have been proportionally limited. But now acting by his Spirit, he is present within all Churches, he visits every clime, and hears the prayers of every soul in the assemblies of the faithful at one and the same moment. The bodily presence of the Son represents the less perfect dispensation. Born of a Jewish virgin, he is bound by Jewish laws, and offers his devotions in the material Jewish Temple. But now, enthroned on high, He sends His Spirit to represent to us the freedom and the glory of the New Covenant. The first law of that Covenant is faith in an unseen Spirit, universal worship offered through an unseen Saviour "in spirit and in truth," and the agency of the Holy Ghost, as being invisible, impresses on us more forcibly the spirituality of His Kingdom. The Spirit also sanctifies and gives efficacy to the Institutions of the Christian Church, more particularly to those two Sacraments which form the basis on which the spiritual fabric rests.

The word Sacrament is derived from the ancient military oath, by which soldiers were bound. The Sacraments are, therefore, tests of our fidelity. They are essentially spiritual ordinances. Considered as mere forms many ways might be devised of remembering our Lord as significant; and as He never indulged in mere forms and ceremonies, it would be contrary to his practice to continue them, on the supposition that they are only forms; and the Quaker, on this principle, is the only consistent Christian in entirely abandoning their use. For the whole genius of Christianity is adverse to forms which embody no truth, and contain no symbolical teaching. The Sacraments must be connected with the Grace of the Holy Ghost, or they are lifeless forms, without force or meaning. Our Church therefore recognizes throughout her whole service a great spiritual element, a great and mighty truth, that the presence of the Holy Ghost can alone bless and sanctify what Christ has commanded to be done; and if it be done as Christ commanded, we cannot suppose that glorious Presence will be withheld. For if we believe that Christ's Sacraments may be rightly administered and rightly received, and yet that the Holy Ghost will not be present, what do we but make the Lord's words a mockery, what are we to think of such words as "whom the Father will send in my Name," if the Holy Ghost be not present, when that High Name is rightly used? What is therefore by some derisively called "Sacramental Religion," is not a belief in the efficacy of Sacraments irrespective of the working of the Holy Ghost, and of the right reception of the worshipper, a mere magical charm, which it is to be hoped no Christian believes in; but it is a firm possession of the reality and efficacy of the Sacraments rightly administered and rightly received (a persuasion which Cranmer, Ridley, and Jewell held to the last hour of their lives), a firm belief in the presence and acting of the Holy Ghost, in and though the word spoken by the eternal Son for the use of men. Our belief in the presence of the Holy Ghost is expressed in the one Sacrament by the ecclesiastical word "Regeneration," and in the other by the words "Real Presence," terms which, however abused, can be clearly separated from that abuse, and satisfactorily explained. Regeneration is our transplanting from a state of nature into a state of grace, and our admission into all the privileges of the sons of God. No power but that of the Holy Ghost can do this, and it belongs to Him specially and exclusively. In one respect it differs entirely from Conversion, with which it is sometimes confounded. Regeneration is bestowed on us as a free gift, that we may be made and may be called children of God. Conversion is also His gift; but it is a more complex word than Regeneration. It implies not only the gift of God to turn from sin by Repentance and Faith, but the effort of man to turn from sin, after he has fallen into it. Regeneration takes place once, and can no more be repeated than a man can be naturally twice born;

Conversion is in one sense life-long, for we never bid farewell to sin till we pass out of this sinful world. In another sense, it may be repeated, for we may be converted, and fall away again, and yet be restored to life. Regeneration, our church teaches us, may be bestowed on Infants, who never committed actual sin. But it is not bestowed on Adults, unless they repent and believe. But to say that an Infant is converted is to pervert the use of words, for an Infant has no actual sin to repent of. Again, by the words "Real Presence" we do not mean that the elements of bread and wine cease to be what in their own nature God has made them, but that the Holy Ghost descending upon them, and receiving them as our oblation to God, sanctifies them to a holy and spiritual use wholly different from their natural use, and through them communicates the Body and Blood of Christ spiritually to the soul of the faithful receiver; so that in a manner wholly incomprehensible to our natural faculties, Christ and His Spirit are truly present, and we do by faith "verily and indeed" spiritually feed on Christ our Lord. This is so often and so plainly stated in our Catechism and Communion office, that it is needless to quote passages familiar to all who use these offices, and the doctrine being there expressed, the words "Real Presence" need not disquiet any serious mind, as though any change of the substance of the elements, or any adoration of *them*, or any carnal presence of Christ's body were implied or intended.

But the sanctification of the Sacraments to the spiritual uses of the soul is far from being the whole of the Spirit's work in the Church of God. We depend on the witness of the Spirit for the authenticity of the Gospels.* That they contain matters of fact is evident from this testimony of the Lord, "He shall teach you all things (necessary by them, we suppose, to be known), and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have told you." There is a peculiar character in the biography of the Gospels which distinguishes them from every other history of man. We are assured that the Spirit of God guided the writers in the selection of facts, and brought to their remembrance all that was necessary for the design of God. Human judgment would have been utterly at fault in the selection of facts from our Lord's wonderful and many-sided life, and would have either omitted something important to be known, or would have multiplied the details unnecessarily, so as to make the work burdensome by its size, or would have cumbered it by reflections, or would have omitted the account of the weakness and incredulity of the disciples. Who but an inspired writer could have been trusted to describe the betrayal of

* As the words *genuineness* and *authenticity* are often confounded, observe that *genuineness* signifies that the document was written by the author whose name it bears; *authenticity*, that the document contains matters of fact, not legendary stories.

Judas, the denial of St. Peter, or above all the sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord himself? Who but an inspired writer could have dogmatically taught the Supreme Divinity of the Son, and yet insisted fully on his inferiority to the Father as man, in the self-same Gospel, putting into his mouth the two startling sentences "My Father is greater than I," and "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?" Thus we see everywhere in the Gospels the footprints of the Divine Spirit. We see that the writers were men of different natural gifts and powers of observation, and yet in one respect singularly alike; and that the diversity of their natural powers under the plastic influence of the Spirit of God was made to subserve God's great purpose. Nothing was told us to gratify curiosity, nothing was withheld which could serve that purpose.

Once more, we may trace the Holy Spirit's gift in the ordination and effectual discharge of the duties of the Ministers of the Church. For the continued gift of the Spirit implies that the words "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them," still remain in unchanged force and efficacy, and that his gifts still render valid the offices performed by frail, fallible men. This truth teaches us how to distinguish between the personal frailties of the man and the benefits we can receive from his ministry, whilst the effectual ministrations even of the traitor Judas Iscariot are guaranteed by no less an authority than our Lord himself. For even Judas was chosen and sent forth to discharge, and doubtless did discharge, the duty assigned to him. We look then above the man who is sent to the Master who sends him, and believe that he may convey to our souls the inestimable blessings of Christ's Word, even though, through his own neglect or apostacy, he, alas! prove a castaway.

In dwelling on this important subject, I have chiefly spoken of the Holy Spirit's work on the Church of God at large. Not that I would keep out of sight, or undervalue his blessed work on the individual heart, but because it is a very common error to depreciate or forget his holy work in the corporate body, and restrict his sacred influences to what is done in the heart of the separate believer. The effect of this separation of the two joint works is most deplorable. It leads multitudes to believe that Truth has no objective side, that piety is only feeling pious, instead of being the life of God in the soul of man, begun by the Spirit in the Church, carried on by the Spirit in the soul, in active and effectual co-operation with our use of the means of grace appointed to assist us, and with our daily endeavour to follow the steps of Christ's most holy life. Whilst therefore we utterly disclaim the doctrine of the grace of the Sacraments, unconnected with their right administration and reception, we would urge on you the necessity of believing in the Spirit's work in the whole body and your duty of co-operating with it, as members of that body, this being in

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some sense as important as His gracious work in our own separate souls. Your life, in short, is a common life; your ransom, a common ransom; the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost common to you all, as Heaven is the common home offered to you. You can neither be born, nor live, nor die, nor rise again, spiritually, for yourselves alone. Remember, I beseech you, that an isolated Christianity is nothing but a spiritualized selfishness.

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THE MISSION OF THE COMFORTER.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." — ST. JOHN iii. 8.



HERE is an important difference between the three first Gospels and the fourth. The three first speak of the facts relating to our Lord's Incarnation as historical truth: St. John deals with their mysterious and sacramental character. We may observe this difference in the very opening of the Gospels. St. Matthew, after connecting our Lord with the royal house of David, simply tells the story of his birth. St. Mark, omitting this as already told, enters almost at once on his ministry. St. Luke, after recounting more fully the history of St. John the Baptist, gives us the particulars which, possibly, he had received from the Blessed Virgin herself, of the Lord's Incarnation, and all the attendant circumstances. But St. John (as the fathers speak) lightens upon us at once like a flash from a thunder-cloud: "In the beginning was the Word." And without pausing to explain why he made use of that expression, he adds, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." What depths of eternal greatness and wisdom are here unfolded; what a mighty mysterious revelation of the Eternal mind, in a few verses, in language transparently simple, in depth of meaning wholly unfathomable!

The same difference of treatment is apparent in St. John's account of the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The three first Evangelists (with very slight variations) furnish us with the same account of our Lord's baptism; St. Matthew and St. Mark record the general commission to baptize all nations. All three Evangelists record the institution of the Lord's Supper; St. Luke according perfectly with the account of St. Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians. St. John does not record the institution of the Lord's Supper at

all; but he dwells on the mysteries connected with both Sacraments, and refers to their perpetual witness to Divine Truth in his first general epistle: "There are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."* In the third chapter of his Gospel he selects Nicodemus, one of the great council of the nation, as the person whose conversation with our Lord he deems it fittest to record; and he proves from that discourse "the great necessity of the Sacrament" of baptism, † of a new birth by water and the spirit. None are excluded from this necessity. All, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, venerated Rabbi or "simple folk," must stoop by this door; for none can enter into the kingdom of Jesus but such as are born of water and of the Spirit. Nicodemus avows himself astonished at the statement. He cannot understand the mystery. He asks in amazement, can the natural birth take place a second time? Our Lord does not condescend to explain his statement, but assists the clouded understanding of his disciple by the illustration in the text: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It is important to have a distinct conception of the points of the comparison, and of its bearing on the whole conversation.

Our Lord had announced to the astonished Rabbi a new and spiritual life connected with his kingdom. He showed him that all who enter his kingdom partake of a new birth, and that in this new birth there are two parts, the visible and the invisible; the water which cleanses the body, and the Spirit which purifies the soul. Water, in the old dispensation, had been used as an outward means of bodily restoration; it should now be made use of in the "mystical washing away of sin." Our Lord connects the earthly element with the spiritual grace by a link, the subtlety of which altogether escapes us, so that what is perceptible to our observation, is inscrutable to our understanding. He leaves it to time, and to the gracious teaching of his Spirit to make known to Nicodemus the practical working of this truth. For we do not know that our Lord baptized Nicodemus, nor do we know at whose hands he received baptism. The mystery of the Sacrament is what St. John sets forth, and loves to dwell upon. In his view, it exalts the dignity of his Master to raise the Sacrament in the eyes of men. In our days, men speak of elevating Christ, when they depreciate his Sacraments; as if Christ could possibly be magnified by undervaluing what Christ instituted for the benefit of the whole world. Surely such Christians take a very different view of truth from the inspired Apostle. One would suppose the true way to raise one's Master in men's thoughts was not to idolize the servant, but to magnify the Master's

* 1 St. John v. 8. † Service for Baptism of Adults.

law, and to esteem the lightest word spoken by Him as more precious than gold; to think of Him as ordaining nothing in which He was not forever present, never moving in the sphere of form and ceremony, but in that of intense solemn reality. In short, to exalt Christ is to lower the man who is sent, in the greatness of the God who sends him; to magnify the thing done, rather than the earthly doer thereof.

On a former occasion I set before you the gracious work of the Holy Spirit on the Church at large, invigorating it with new life; bestowing on it both miraculous powers and spiritual graces; endowing the Sacraments with the gift of His Presence; and so making the one to become, when rightly received, the ordinary channel of our new Birth, and the other the means whereby we receive the Lord's Body and Blood: inspiring fallible men with the power to reveal new and Divine Truth; commissioning his servants to declare that Truth, and validly to perform spiritual functions. But beside this general gift to the Church at large, the Holy Ghost carries on in the hearts of the faithful a work leading to their personal sanctification and salvation. On this work I now desire chiefly to speak. And I wish you all to observe distinctly, that when I magnify the Sacrament which Christ appointed, I neither attribute to it a superstitious charm, nor wish to exalt it above the dignity which the inspired writer ascribes to it, much less would I deny the necessity of that continual life-long work of grace in the soul, of which the Sacrament is both the sign and the seal. Our Lord's illustration in the text is taken from the natural world. This is His continual habit, to dwell on, and to spiritualize what we call nature; but which is not a power apart from God, but God's own handiwork: for not only is the God of Nature also the God of grace, but his work in the one sphere is analogous to his work in the other. A very simple elementary truth, one would suppose, yet how much forgotten, misunderstood, misrepresented. How many false principles would have been avoided in ancient and modern times, if men had only believed (as Scripture teaches) that God works in grace as he works in nature, making allowance for the different subjects on which he works, and the different purposes He has in view. When God works in Nature He works on Matter: it has no power to resist his will; it forms such combinations as he directs, and is subject to such laws as he imposes. But when He works in Grace, He works on Mind, to which He has vouchsafed a likeness in immortal being and attributes to Himself; to which He has given a power denied to Matter — the power to reflect, to compare, to will, to love, to hate, nay to work with or to resist, for its own good, or its own undoing, Omnipotence itself. The destiny of Matter is made for it. The destiny of mind, the mind makes for itself; though whenever it works for good it must be aided and moulded by the plastic power of a higher, wiser, nobler mind. And yet some

men would represent God as acting more arbitrarily, capriciously, tyrannically, and far less lovingly, on the world of mind, than on the world of matter; as less full of goodwill to the soul that thinks, than to the matter incapable of thought; and as "passing by," with a lofty indifference, the necessities, and the woes, and the aspirations of the souls which He has permitted for ever to exist. Surely the Bible, soundly interpreted, teaches no such doctrine; and the common sense of mankind will for ever revolt against it.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth." The grace of the comparison is wholly lost in English, because we use one word for the wind and another for the Holy Spirit; whereas both in the Greek and Hebrew tongues the same word expresses both ideas. So that some* have translated the text, "the Spirit bloweth where he listeth," yet we cannot doubt incorrectly, as thus the point of analogy is lost.

Again, there are two words in Greek signifying wind, one, applicable to the more violent motion of the atmosphere; and the other, which is here used, signifying rather the gentler breathing of the air, which is in constant motion. "The wind bloweth where it listeth:" not the hurricane with its impetuous violence; not the simoon with pestilential blast; but rather (as it has been well translated) "the air breatheth where it listeth." Go forth into the woods at noon on some warm summer's day, and note the deep silence that prevails. The song of birds is hushed; the lowing of the cattle is still; the very hum of insects is scarcely audible. Not a cloud crosses the sky; not a breath of wind is felt. Suddenly, without a note of preparation, without knowing "whence it comes, or whither it goes," a rustle is heard in the forest. Every leaf feels the sweet impulse; a breath passes over the water, a soft murmur is heard, and gently dies away. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The free motion of the air is one of the greatest mysteries in nature. It is perceptible to all our faculties. It is the sustenance of life. It infuses into us new vigor and unspeakable delight. Yet it is inscrutable. The whence, the whither, the how, the why, what philosopher can tell us? The secret mystery of its coming and going no man knows. This vital air that breathes everywhere in constant, healthful, life-sustaining motion; sometimes fluttering as a whisper, or heard as a "small still voice;" sometimes rising like a "mighty wind," that fills and overawes, and is then hushed into silence, is our Lord's beautiful illustration of the working of the Holy Spirit on the mind of man.

We learn from the comparison that the influence of the Spirit is as wide-spread as the breath of air. It is confined to no class. It is limited to no age or nation. The love of the Spirit is the love of the human race. Yet it is as free as it is wide, independent of human

* As Luther.

laws and conditions, to be vouchsafed or withdrawn as God sees fit. We may not, indeed, say that the gift was the same before our Lord ascended into Heaven, as after He ascended; nor can we say that the Spirit is vouchsafed to Heathens as to Christians; but I think we should not err in saying, that wherever there is a tender, loving heart, a generous impulse, an honest mind, a reverent homage to God, a desire to "do justly and love mercy," a shrinking from injustice, cruelty, and impurity, whether in Jew, heathen, or Christian, there is the motion of the blessed Spirit for good, however far the heart may be from the perfect knowledge of God. And how various and manifold is this gift. As the air blows on the mountain-tops, or in the sultry plains, in the autumn evening, or in the clear frosty air of the winter morn, or is borne in upon the tide ever in healthful though various motion, so the Spirit variously works on the human heart. Now It whispers simple truths into the child's breast; now It nerves the enduring man for a great and hazardous enterprise; now It suggests the first thought of devotion, or strengthens the last act of faith: It speaks comfort to the mourner, and fear to the headstrong youth: It places in the hands of the preacher the "bow that is drawn at a venture," and that sends conviction to the heart: It aids the counsel of friends, and helps the weak to resist temptation, and brings before us the better way, and bids us walk therein, and be safe: It speaks of contentment and hope amidst suffering, and assures us, in dark and dreary hours, that a way will be opened before us, and that at evening-tide there shall be light. O, how gracious is this blessed Spirit, how winning, and how wise! He chooses means adapted to hearts which differ as widely as the faces of mankind. He does not force truth upon us, but presents it to the mind, so that it may be the heart's own choice, inviting, persuasive, yet not irresistible, for then there could be no grace in accepting it; and that the Holy Spirit is not irresistible it is important to show for several reasons. Nothing can more clearly prove this than our Lord's impassioned, bitter cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*" Words full of the insult of the deepest mockery had there been anything withheld which the Grace of God could have given, consistently with man's own personal responsibility of accepting or rejecting the offered mercy. And St. Paul's earnest entreaty is of the same nature. "We, then, as workers together with God, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain." Yet he intreats mockingly if no grace that might be resisted were vouchsafed. If the Holy Spirit could not be resisted, though all might be saved by compulsion, salvation would not be the glorious crown of the Christian's own life-long struggle. All the sympathy of Christ with his much-tried and faithful soldiers would be lost; all the sympathy of the Redeemed in Heaven with each other would be des-

troyed. For what is sympathy but fellow-feeling with other sufferers in their endurance? The Redeemed will love each other in Heaven because they have all "come out of great tribulation," and they love Christ in Heaven because the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son to help them in their struggles, not to force them into salvation. They know they would never have reached that blessed shore without his constant aid, and yet there is a humble, healthful consciousness within each heart of having not done violence to those gentle breathings of goodness, of having made a vigorous and continued effort, of having cherished a life-long desire, of having struck out with both hands earnestly to reach the wished-for shore.

We know that even in lower things, in schools, or contests for earthly rewards, if prizes ten times more valuable were bestowed without an effort, they would be valueless in the eyes of those who received them. And what meaning would those noble words have to us, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God;" and again, "But we see Jesus for the sufferings of death, crowned with glory and honour;" if instead of bearing our cross after him, we were landed in Heaven without an effort, and had no need to raise an arm, or maintain a struggle to take us thither? So that the doctrine of irresistible grace is founded on a misconception of the whole nature of man, and of the reward proper to man's nature, and on a misinterpretation of all the passages of Scripture which describe the struggle and the success of man.

So, then, as the grace of the Holy Spirit is resistible, as that blessed Person may be resisted, grieved, vexed, quenched, and his light kindled or put out within us, we should see that we put forth all the powers and desires of our minds to meet that gentle motion, and to fall in with its first suggestions. Nor are we to look for his operation commonly, in a way implying violence, or sudden fiery impulses, that take the heart by storm, and leave no room for resistance. When the Holy Ghost first came down from Heaven, It was indeed "like a mighty wind, that shook the house" where the Apostles were assembled; for It was sent to give evidence to unbelievers of a power that could not be resisted, and to support weak and persecuted believers in the discharge of their high mission. But the miracle was never exactly repeated, not even in Apostolic times, and the gift of tongues has since been withdrawn. We know, from the history of Elijah, that not in the "great and strong wind which rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks," nor in the "earthquake," nor in the "fire," but in the "still small voice" of love, the Lord's presence was manifested. So it is not for man to assemble his fellows, and prescribe the manner of the Spirit's operation. Now it is to be seen and felt; in this way only; on those very benches, with those set expressions of

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feeling and with none other, ye must be born again: feel as I have felt, or ye cannot be born of the Spirit at all. This is the direct opposite of the text. It is not the gentle motion of the air, infinitely various in its operation; now waving on the tops of lofty pines, now whispering on the lowly flower, now stealing over the wide prairie, or visiting the retired valley, or lurking behind the summer cloud, or quivering on the aspen leaf, and then retiring into silence: it is rather the fiery furnace-blast, that pours forth fast and furious, scorches but not invigorates, and requires again and again to be kindled by the same spasmodic effort. We do not look for the gentle promptings of the Spirit in such ways as these, much less should we limit His grace to such means. We may admit that He can bless efforts the most irregular, but we may rather expect His blessing in the meek and humble ways of sobriety and trustfulness, such as His word records and prescribes. The greatest favour ever bestowed by the Holy Ghost upon one of the children of men was granted to a lowly Jewish maiden, who in few words of artless modesty and confiding faith, with no graphic description or sensation-speech, humbly submitted to the gracious will and word of the Most High. And the words of the Angel were as simple as her own. In no less reverent spirit does our Church train her children to ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and with no less trustfulness does she humbly expect that it will be bestowed in answer to our prayers.

It may possibly be objected to our Baptismal Service, "Why, if you deny the Holy Spirit's visible operation, do you assert so positively that the child is regenerate?" But there is a vast difference between what we may expect when we use the means which Christ has prescribed, and where means are used which men invent themselves, to which no Divine promise is annexed. The Sacrament of Baptism is a Divine institution, to which Christ has promised his presence; and wherever Christ is His Spirit is present also to bless and sanctify. But let it be remembered that when we say the child is regenerate, we do not mean what is intended when people say the man is converted. Conversion supposes a change of mind, an actual turning from sin to holiness. We ascribe no such change to the infant. We say that by the grace of the Holy Spirit it is taken out of the state of nature in which it was born, and is placed in a state of grace; it is made a christian; it is now God's child; it has the adoption and the privileges of sons; it is an heir of the kingdom; and that so much is implied in all the Scriptural accounts of baptism in the New Testament, and that St. Peter expressly makes such promises to our children. But we nowhere speak of converted children. In order to conversion, a person must have committed actual sin, which we are sure infants have not done. Further, we do not limit the grace of the Holy Spirit to any one time, nor do we say in what manner He will work on the heart of the child;

but we say distinctly, that in order to eternal salvation, the child, if it live and grow up, must "crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin," and that "all things belonging to the Spirit living and growing in him, having victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh, and being endued with heavenly virtues," he will thus, and thus only, be in the end "everlastingly rewarded."

This office, therefore, only thanks God for a present promised benefit, but neither prescribes the manner in which the Holy Ghost will at any future time work on the man's heart, nor does it in any way anticipate his future and eternal state, except according to the conditions which the Scripture prescribes as necessary for all Christians.

And now, my brethren, how shall we improve this passage of God's holy word to our own use and benefit? If the air that breathes in constant motion be our blessed Lord's own symbol of His Spirit's grace, if we daily breathe and enjoy, and are sustained by the air, — how much more should we long for, how careful should we be to pray for the higher gift? Above all, how much should we strive not to provoke, resist, grieve, or quench, the Spirit of Truth, of Order, of Decency, of Beauty, of Wisdom, of Fear, of Love, Charity, Purity, and Peace; provoke Him by opposition, vex Him by neglect, quench His rays by deeds of darkness and impurity, by deeds and words of violence, by stifling the convictions of our conscience, by wilful disorder, disunion, and disobedience to any good advice; for if, even under the old covenant, "when they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them," how much greater the sin, how much surer and more severe the punishment, when the nobler blessing is obstinately rejected; and remember that all non-improvement of ourselves is virtually rejection of the grace which helps us to improve.

The more common and ordinary our duties in life are, "the more necessary it is" (as has been well said) "to keep up the tone of our minds to that higher region of thought and feeling, in which every work seems dignified in proportion to the ends for which, and the spirit in which, it is done."* "And what we achieve depends less on the amount of time we possess, than on the improvement of our time."

I leave the subject with one word of *warning* suitable to a generation ever boasting of superior light, yet showing too many tokens of unreality and blindness to its faults, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see: therefore your sin remaineth." And with one word of inexpressible *comfort*: "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And with one word of *praise* and *trust*, fit to express our sense of God's great mercy: "All my fresh springs are in Thee!"

* J. S. Mill. Address to the Students of the University of St. Andrews.

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